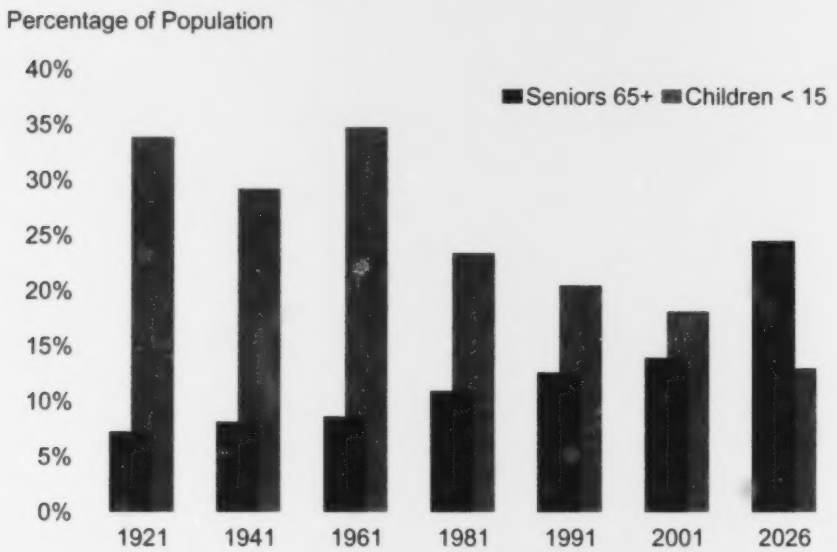
Women and Families in Nova Scotia

Changing population:

According to the Census of Canada, the population of Nova Scotia was 908,005 in 2001. Women and girls made up 52% of this population, overall.

In 2001, 14% of Nova Scotia's population was aged 65 years and over, of which the majority were women. Women comprised 58% of those aged 65 and over, 63% of those aged 75 and over and 70% of those aged 85 and over.

Children and Seniors as Proportion of Population
Nova Scotia, 1921-2026



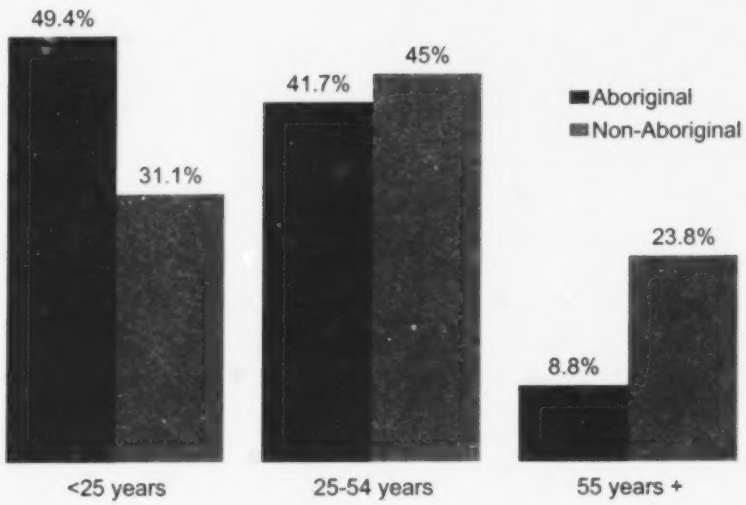
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Matrices 6367-6379, 1996 Census, 2001 Census, Population Projections to 2026.

Nova Scotia's population continues to age. In 1961, there were four times as many children as there were seniors. In 2001, there were only 1.3 times as many children as there were seniors. It's expected that there will be almost twice as many seniors in Nova Scotia as there are children by 2026 if these trends continue. In part, the aging of the population is influenced by factors such as longer life expectancy, declining fertility rates, and traditionally low levels of immigration to this area.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, May, 2003

The Aboriginal Population

Age by Aboriginal Status
Nova Scotia, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Not all populations within Nova Scotia are aging at the same rate. Nova Scotia's Aboriginal population is considerably younger than its non-Aboriginal population. Almost half of Aboriginal persons in Nova Scotia are under the age of 25 compared to 31% of non-Aboriginal persons. Non-Aboriginal persons in Nova Scotia, on the other hand, are much more likely to be older. Close to one quarter (24%) of non-Aboriginal Nova Scotians are aged 55 and over compared to less than 9% of Aboriginal Nova Scotians. These differences, in part, are due to higher fertility rates and lower life expectancy in this population[1].

Changing Families:

Marriage and Divorce

In 1999, there were 5,481 marriages and 1,954 divorces in Nova Scotia for a ratio of 2.8 marriages for each divorce. In 1971, the ratio of marriages to divorces in Nova Scotia was 9.6. In 2000, the proportion of married couples expected to divorce before their 30th wedding anniversary (total divorce rate) was 30.4% for Nova Scotia and 37.7% for Canada as a whole[2].

Young women (aged 20-29) in Nova Scotia are staying single longer, are more likely to live common-law than in the past, and are much less likely to marry than they were even ten years ago.

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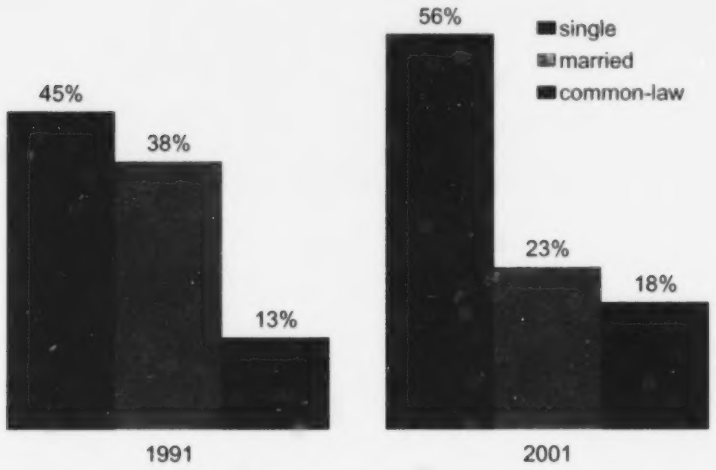
Marital Status of 20-29 Year-Old Women
Nova Scotia, 1991 and 2001



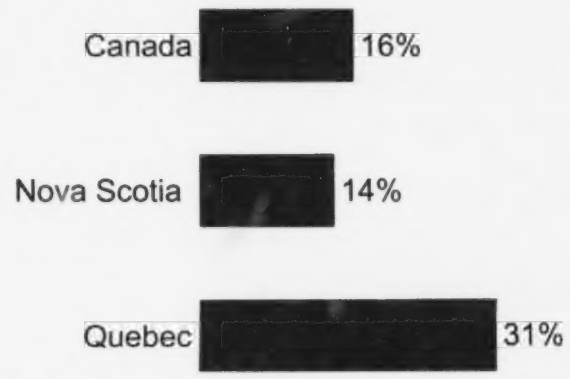
In 1991, 38% of 20-29 year-old women in Nova Scotia (and 27% of 20-29 year-old men) were married. By 2001, only 23% of women and 16% of men in this age group were married.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, 1996 Census

Common-Law Relationships

Common-law relationships are increasingly popular. Women and men under the age of 40 are much more likely to live common-law than older people. In Nova Scotia, 14% of 20-39 year old women, 6% of 40-64 year old women, and only 1% of women aged 65 and over live common-law.

Proportion of 20-39 Year Old Women
Living Common-Law, 2001



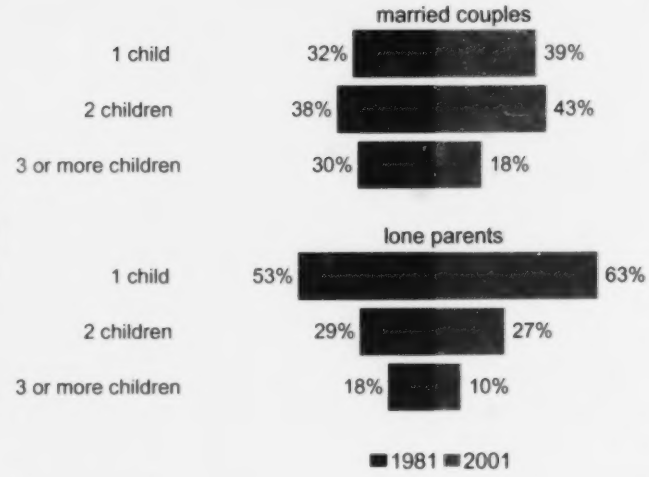
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Same-Sex Partnerships

The 2001 Census was the first to take into account same-sex partnerships. In Nova Scotia, a total of 855 same-sex couples identified themselves as living in a common-law relationship[3]. Of these, 55% were female same-sex couples and 45% were male. 21% of female same-sex couples in Nova Scotia have children living with them compared to just under 5% of male same-sex couples.

Families and Children

Families with Children at Home by Family Type
Nova Scotia, 1981 and 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

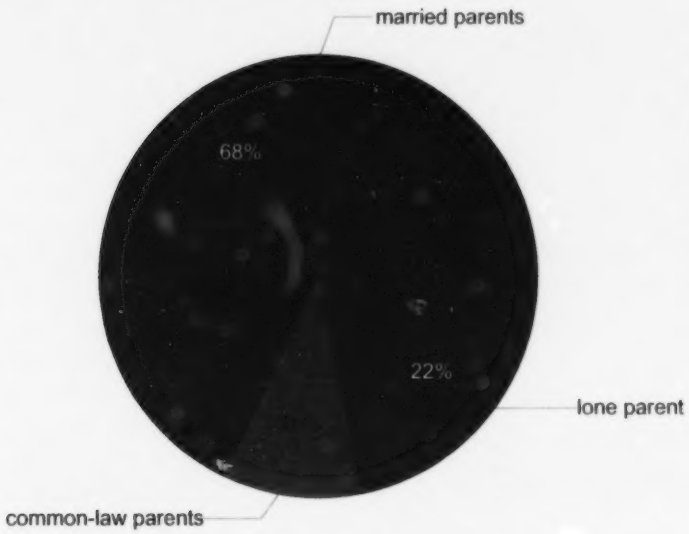
In 2001, there were 262,910 families in the province. Although married couples with children still comprise the largest family group in Nova Scotia, this type of family is on the decline. Married couples with children comprised close to 80% of all families with children in Nova Scotia in 1981 but only 65% of families with children in 2001. While numbers of married couples with children declined, the number of common-law couples with children and lone-parents increased substantially. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of common-law couples with children more than tripled, from 3,815 to 12,705 and the number of lone-parent families increased from 26,155 to 44,135. In 2001, more than a quarter (27%) of families with children in Nova Scotia were led by lone-parents, 83% of which were female-headed.

Number of Children at Home by Family Status
Families with Children, Nova Scotia, 1981 and 2001

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Families in Nova Scotia are generally getting smaller. This is especially the case for married couple families. In 1981, 30% of married couples with children had three or more children living at home compared to only 18% of married couples in 2001. In 2001, 39% of married couples and 63% of lone-parents had only one child living at home.

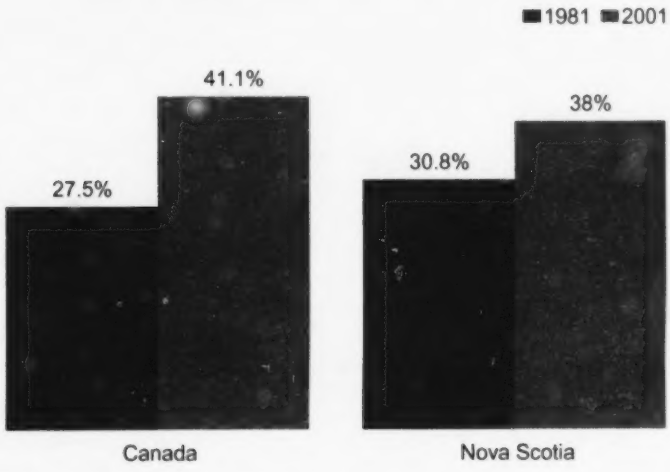
Children Aged 0-14 by Family Structure
Nova Scotia, 2001



The majority (68%) of young children (under the age of 15) in Nova Scotia live with married parents. Over 22% of young children live with a lone-parent while 10% live with common-law parents.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Proportion of Young Adults (20-29 yrs) Living with their Parents
Canada, Nova Scotia, 1981 and 2001



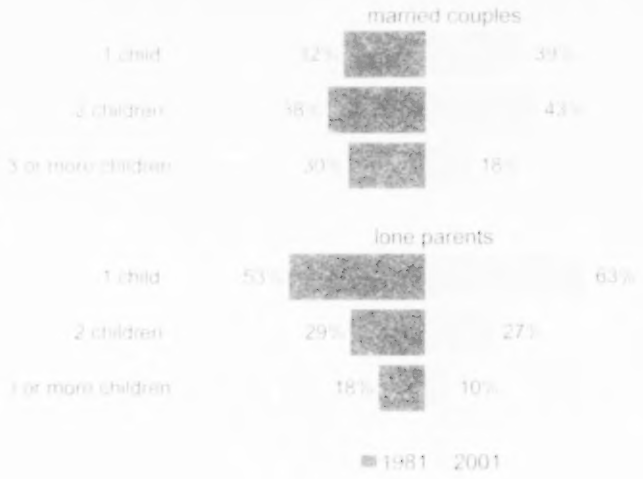
In Nova Scotia, as is the case with the rest of Canada, young adults are increasingly living with their parents. In 1981, 30.8% of 20-29 year olds in Nova Scotia were living with their parents. By 2001, 38% of young adults in the province were living with their parents.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Families with no children at home, however, are also on the increase. Between 1981 and 2001, families comprised of married couples with no children at home increased by more than 41% while common-law couples without children increased by 225%. Nova Scotia has the lowest proportion of couples with children at home compared to other provinces. In part, this is due to Nova Scotia's older population.

Families and Children

Families with Children at Home by Family Type
Nova Scotia, 1981 and 2001



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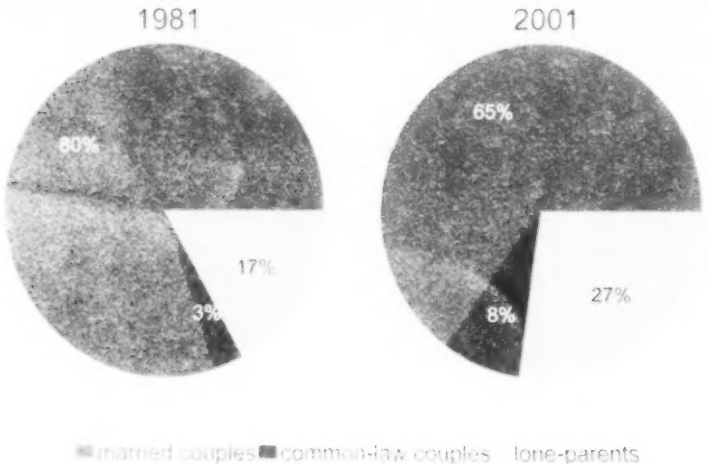

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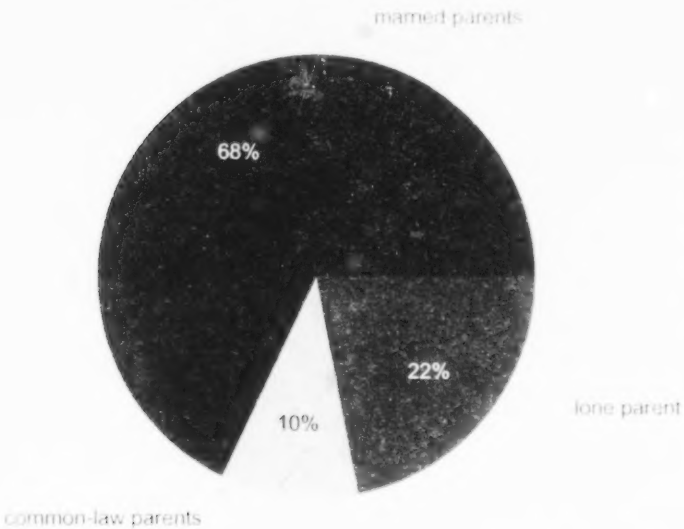

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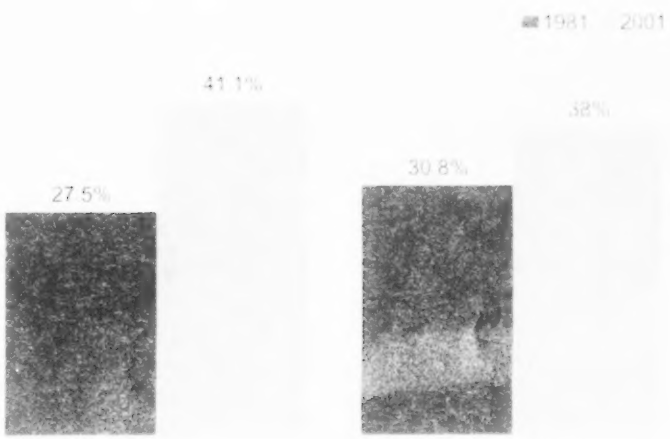

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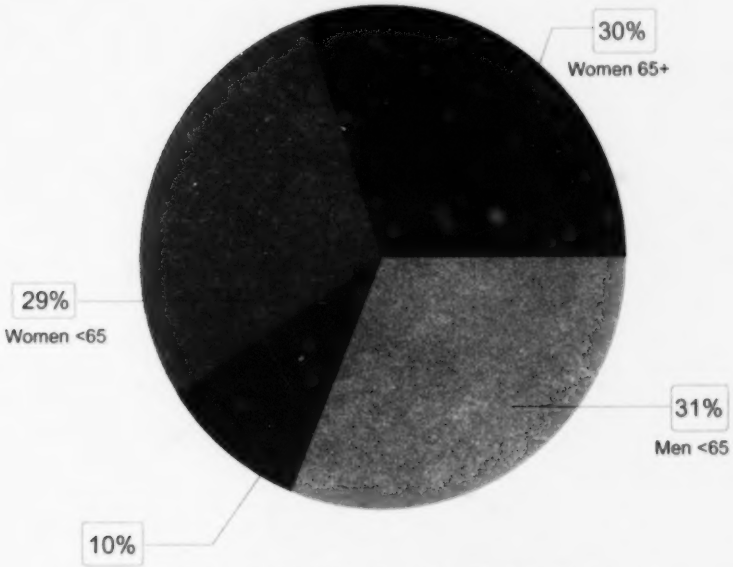
Persons Living Alone by Sex and Age
Nova Scotia, 2001

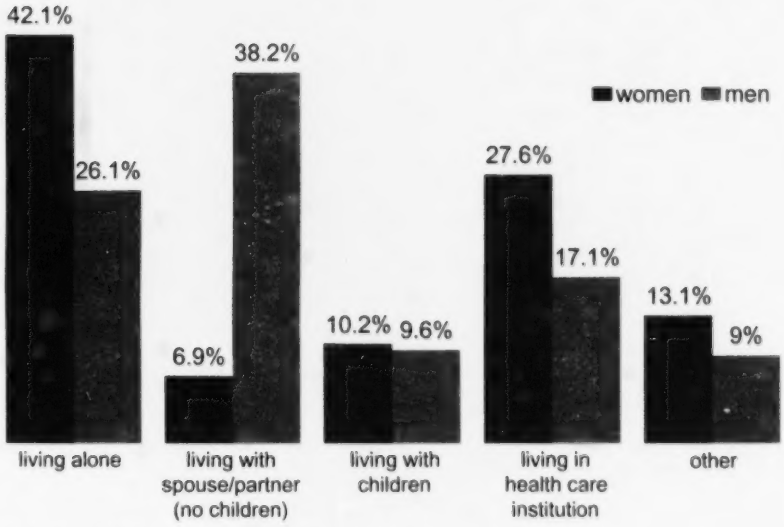


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Increasing numbers of Nova Scotians are living alone. In 2001, one quarter (25%) of households in the province were one-person households. This represents a 16% increase from 1996. Women, primarily those aged 65 and over, are more likely to live alone than are men. Close to 40% of women aged 65 and over live alone compared to only 18% of men aged 65 and over.

Living Arrangements for Women and Men Aged 85 and Over
Nova Scotia, 2001

There are large differences in the living arrangements of our oldest citizens. Women aged 85 and over are more than one and a half times more likely to live alone or to live in a health care institution than their male counterparts.

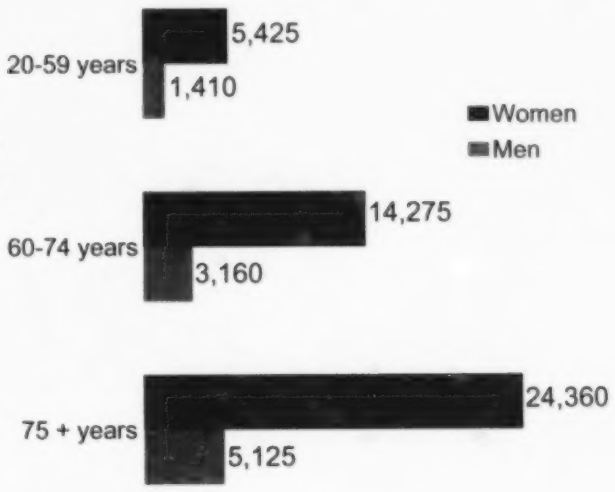


Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Men aged 85 and over are five and a half times more likely to be living with a spouse. In part, these differences have to do with life expectancy differences between the sexes and differences in the age of women and men who married in the past. Correspondingly, differences in the marital status of senior men and women are also striking.

Widowed Persons by Age and Sex, Nova Scotia, 2001

The vast majority of widowed persons in Nova Scotia are women. Overall, 82% of widowed persons are women and 18% are men.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

Notes:

[1] National-level statistics indicate that Aboriginal women had a total fertility rate of 2.7 children in 1996, compared to 1.6 for non-Aboriginal women. Though the life expectancy of Aboriginal women in Canada has been increasing rapidly (ie., an increase of 9.8 years between 1975 and 1995 compared to 3.8 years for all Canadian women), Aboriginal women's life expectancy remains shorter than non-Aboriginal women's. In 1995, life expectancy for Registered Indian women was 75.7 years compared with 81.4 years for all Canadian women. Source: Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada 2000: A Gender-Based Statistical Report*.

[2] Source: Statistics Canada, The Daily, Dec. 2/02 and Feb. 6/03.

[3] The number of same-sex couples in the 2001 Census reflects people who identified themselves as living in a same-sex common-law relationship. The census did not ask about sexual orientation. Therefore the data on same-sex partnerships should not be interpreted as an estimation of the number of gays and lesbians in Nova Scotia, some of whom may be living alone or with parents or friends. It is also likely that the numbers of people who identified themselves as living in a same-sex relationship in the 2001 Census were underestimated due to factors such as the stigma that is still attached to lesbian and gay lives.

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